

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PC-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 JUSE-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 COME-00

EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04

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P R 162110Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2886

INFO AMCONSUL CALI UNN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 0538

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, CO

SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. WITH THE LONG HOLIDAY PERIOD OVER, THE PACE OF ACTIVITY ON ALL FRONTS BEGAN TO PICK UP. ON THE EVE OF THE RESUMPTION OF ITS NATIONAL CONVENTION, THE PERENNIALY DISPUTATIOUS LIBERAL PARTY CONTINUED IN DISACCORD. THE BANK COLOMBIANIZATION BILL'S CONSTITUTIONALITY WAS CHALLENGED BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT. THE COURT WAS ALSO REPORTED TO HAVE DECIDED TO REQUEST THE EXTRADITION OF THE FORMER COMPTROLLER GENERAL, WHOSE TRIAL IN COLOMBIA MIGHT WELL UNCOVER SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL SCANDAL. MOVES BY THE AGRICULTURE MINISTER BROUGHT HIM INTO CONFLICT WITH THE MAOIST PEASANTS ASSOCIATION. DAS DENIED CHARGES THAT IT HAD DEPORTED CHILEAN EXILES. END SUMMARY.

2. STILL BICKERING LIBERAL PARTY SET TO RESUME CONVENTION. THE LIBERAL PARTY CONVENTION WAS SET TO RECONVENE JAN 16 AFTER A 35-DAY RECESS. WHICH WAS
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SUPPOSED TO GIVE THE TURBAYISTA AND FIRST FORCE FACTIONS

TIME TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES OVER THE MAKE-UP OF THE PARTY DIRECTORATE WHICH FORCED THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE CONVENTION LAST DECEMBER (75 BOGOTA 12222). THE DIFFERENCES, HOWEVER, PERSIST. FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT WOULD IMPROVE THE POSSIBILITY THAT FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS AND HIS DISSIDENT LIBERALS MIGHT SCORE A RESOUNDING VICTORY IN THE MID-TERM ELECTIONS. LLERAS HAS BEEN WAGING AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. SHOULD LLERAS FACE A DIVIDED LIBERAL PARTY HIS CHANCES OF ELECTING MORE OF HIS FOLLOWERS TO THE DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLIES AND CITY COUNCILS WOULD BE INCREASED AND HIS STATURE AS A LEADING LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1978 GREATLY ENHANCED.

3. SUIT BROUGHT AGAINST BANK COLOMBIANIZATION BILL. A SUIT AGAINST THE BANK COLOMBIANIZATION BILL WAS FILED WITH THE COLOMBIAN SUPREME COURT THIS WEEK. THE PLAINTIFF IS AN ATTORNEY REPORTEDLY RETAINED BY FIRST NATIONAL CITY BANK. THE SUIT INCORPORATES A NUMBER OF ARGUMENTS. IT CLAIMS THAT THE LAW VIOLATES THE PROVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH GRANTS EQUAL RIGHTS TO COLOMBIANS AND FOREIGNERS, AND THAT THE LAW IS CONTRARY TO EXISTING TREATIES BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE US, AND COLOMBIA AND THE UK. THE COURT HAS 90 WORKING DAYS IN WHICH TO HAND DOWN A DECISION.

4. COURT REPORTEDLY REQUESTS EXTRADITION OF FORMER COMPTROLLER GENERAL. BOGOTA PRESS REPORTED ON JAN 16 THAT THE COLOMBIAN SUPREME COURT HAD DECIDED TO REQUEST THROUGH THE FONOFF THE EXTRADITION FROM THE U.S. OF FORMER COMPTROLLER GENERAL ESCALLON ORDONEZ. THE FONOFF HAS NOT YET RECEIVED AN OFFICIAL REQUEST. SHOULD ESCALLON BE BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN COLOMBIA, THE POLITICAL FALL-OUT COULD BE CONSIDERABLE. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED IN INFORMED CIRCLES THAT, IN ADDITION TO FEATHERING HIS OWN NEST, ESCALLON ALSO DID ILLEGAL FAVORS FOR IMPORTANT FIGURES ACROSS THE COLOMBIAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM, IN ORDER TO GAIN POLITICAL BACKING.

5. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE EXPELLS FARMERS ASSOCIATION FROM MINISTRY OFFICES. ON JAN 12 THE MAOIST, SO-CALLED "SINCELEJO-LINE" NATIONAL FARM USERS ASSOCIATION (ANUC) CONFIDENTIAL

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SUED THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FOR "ILLEGALLY INVADING THE PRIVATE QUARTERS" OF THE ASSOCIATION. IN LATE DEC THE MINISTER HAD EXPELLED THE SINCELEJO-ANUC FROM ITS OFFICES IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AFTER SOME LEADERS OF THE ORGANIZATION OCCUPIED THE MINISTRY TO PROTEST GOC AGRICULTURAL POLICIES. ANUC, WHICH WAS CREATED BY THE GOC IN 1968, SPLIT INTO TWO FACTIONS IN 1970 AS A RESULT OF AN ELECTION WHICH EXTREMISTS WON.

WHILE NEVER WITHDRAWING THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE ORIGINAL ANUC, THE GOC SPONSORED AND GRANTED LEGAL STATUS TO ANOTHER "MODERATE" ANUC, THE SO-CALLED ARMENIA-LINE. SINCE THAT TIME, BOTH GROUPS HAVE HAD OFFICES IN THE MINISTRY. THE MINISTER HAS NOW RESOLVED THIS LONG-STANDING ANOMALY AND THE SUIT AGAINST HIM UNDOUBTEDLY WILL NOT PROSPER. NOVERTHELESS, THE MILITANT SINCELEJO-LINE GROUP HAS BEEN THE LEADER OF MANY LAND INVASIONS DURING THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. THE TEMPO OF THE INVASIONS HAS DECREASED CONSIDERABLY SINCE PRESIDENT LOPEZ TOOK OFFICE. THE MINISTERS ACTION MAY RESULT IN A RETURN TO THE PREVIOUS HIGH LEVELS THUS ADDING TO THE ALREADY SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC ORDER IN COLOMBIA.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE SECURITY DEPARTMENT (DAS) ACCUSED OF DEPORTING CHILEAN EXILES. THE COLOMBIAN COMMITTEE OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHILEAN PEOPLE ON JAN 13, CHARGED THAT THE ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY (DAS) HAD EXPELLED AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF THE APPROXIMATELY 300 CHILEANS WHO SOUGHT ASYLUM IN COLOMBIA FOLLOWING THE OVERTHROW OF THE ALLENDE GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO THE COMMITTEE'S VICE PRESIDENT, THE CHILEANS HAD BEEN EXPELLED FROM COLOMBIA FOR ALLEGED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. ON JAN 16, DAS CHIEF, GENERAL JOSE JOAQUIN MATALLANA, DENIED THE ACCUSATION, STATING THAT 57 CHILEANS HAD LEFT THE COUNTRY VOLUNTARILY AFTER FINDING JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. MATALLANA TOOK THE OCCASION TO RECOMMEND THAT THE NEWS MEDIA (REFERRING PRINCIPALLY TO EL ESPECTADOR, WHICH CARRIED A UPI STORY ON THE CHARGES) CHECK WITH APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS BEFORE PRINTING STORIES ON SUCH SUBJECTS. VAKY

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